



117th Congress Accomplishments

In the 117th Congress, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs made critical progress toward achieving priorities identified by Native communities from across the country, securing the most dedicated funding in U.S. history, and ensuring that policies benefiting Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians were included in major pieces of legislation. Under Chairman Schatz's leadership, the Committee held 50 events – surpassing the previous Congress by over a dozen – confirmed nominees for Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service, and passed 18 bills signed into law by President Biden. A more detailed description of these accomplishments and more is below.

LARGEST INVESTMENT IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES IN U.S. HISTORY

More than **\$73 billion** in dedicated funding was secured for Native communities – the most in U.S. history. This historic investment flowed through five landmark laws – the [American Rescue Plan Act](#), [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#), [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022](#), [Inflation Reduction Act](#), and [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#).

Largest Direct Investment in Tribal Governments in U.S. History

More than **\$21 billion** to support Tribal governments' COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

More Than Doubled Funding for Native Health Care

More than **\$24.4 billion** for Native health care, including the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems.

Cleared Longstanding Water and Sanitation Infrastructure Funding Backlogs for Native Communities

More than **\$7.4 billion** for water and sanitation infrastructure serving Native communities, including **\$3.5 billion** for Tribal-serving sanitation facilities improvements and construction, and **\$2.5 billion** to complete existing Indian water rights settlements authorizations.

Cleared Longstanding Tribal Transportation Backlogs

More than **\$3.9 billion** for Tribal roads, bridges, transit, and transportation projects.

Nearly Doubled Funding for Native Education

More than **\$2.7 billion** for Native education programs at the Bureau of Indian Education and Department of Education.

Nearly Doubled Funding for Native American Housing

More than **\$2.3 billion** for Native housing programs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Secured Direct Funding for Telecommunications Infrastructure Serving Native Communities

More than **\$2.1 billion** for telecommunications infrastructure serving Native communities, including broadband.

Secured Historic Investment in Native Children and Families

More than **\$2.1 billion** for programs serving Native children and families at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Secured Historic Investment in Climate Resiliency, Environmental Protection, and Natural Resources Management

More than **\$1.4 billion** to support climate resiliency, environmental protection, and natural resources management efforts in Native communities.

Increased Funding to Help Keep Native Communities Safe

More than **\$1.4 billion** to address public safety needs in Native communities, complementing historic provisions in the 2022 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization to restore Tribal criminal jurisdiction.

Secured Historic Investment in Economic Development for Native Communities

More than **\$683 million** to grow Native-owned small businesses, facilitate access to capital, and boost economic development in Native communities.

Secured Historic Investment in Tribal Energy Development

More than **\$533 million** for Tribal energy development and electrification projects, including **\$75 million** in Tribal direct loans for energy development – the largest in history. Plus, **\$20 billion** in loan guarantees for Tribal energy development – a tenfold increase.

Increased Funding for Native Languages and Cultures

More than **\$126.6 million** to support Native language revitalization and protect Native American cultural heritage.

ENACTED COMMITTEE LEGISLATION

Eighteen bills referred to the Committee were passed into law, including the Schatz-authored Native American Language Resource Center Act and Durbin Feeling Native American Languages Act.

The Native American Language Resource Center Act of 2022

- Provides federal support for the establishment and operation of one or more Native American language resource centers in furtherance of the policies set forth in the Native American Languages Act (NALA) of 1990.

The Durbin Feeling Native American Languages Act of 2022

- Amends NALA to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.
- Directs the President to review federal agencies' compliance with NALA requirements and make recommendations to improve interagency coordination in support of Native American languages.
- Authorizes a federal survey of Native language use and language revitalization programs' unmet needs every five years to allow Native communities and Congress to improve targeting of federal resources for Native American languages.

The Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony (STOP) Act of 2021

- Provides a framework to prevent the export of Native American cultural items held in violation of current federal laws for sale in foreign countries, and establishes a process to repatriate such items.
- Improves coordination between federal agencies, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian Organizations seeking to prevent trafficking and promote repatriation of Native American cultural items.
- Increases the maximum penalty for trafficking items of Native American cultural heritage in violation of current federal law.

The Repealing Existing Substandard Provisions Encouraging Conciliation with Tribes (RESPECT) Act

- Repeals 11 outdated federal laws relating to Indians with the goal of reversing certain historic wrongs committed by the United States against Indians and Indian Tribes.

A bill to amend the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children Act to extend the deadline for a report by the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children, and for other purposes.

- Provides a two-year extension for the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children to publish its report and make recommendations for legislative and policy improvements to federal, state, and Tribal programs that serve Native children.

A bill to amend the Not Invisible Act of 2019 to extend, and provide additional support for, the activities of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice Joint Commission on Reducing Violent Crime Against Indians, and for other purposes.

- Extends the termination date of the Joint Commission and the deadline for the Commission's recommendations by 18 months.
- Provides additional support for the Joint Commission's activities.

A bill to authorize the Seminole Tribe of Florida to lease or transfer certain land, and for other purposes.

- Authorizes the Seminole Tribe of Florida to lease, sell, convey, warrant, or transfer its non-trust lands.

The Desert Sage Youth Wellness Center Access Improvement Act

- Authorizes IHS to acquire private land to facilitate access to the Desert Sage Youth Wellness Center in Hemet, California.

The Klamath Tribe Judgment Fund Repeal Act

- Repeals the Klamath Tribe Judgment Fund Act.
- Promotes the Klamath Tribe's ability to exercise its sovereign authority and discretion over Tribal funds.
- Provides greater flexibility for the Klamath Tribe to access and use monies awarded following successful litigation against the United States.

The Don Young Alaska Native Health Care Land Transfers Act of 2022

- Provides for the conveyance of certain properties to the Tanana Tribal Council located in Tanana, Alaska; Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium located in Sitka, Alaska; and the Alaskan Native Tribal Health Consortium located in Anchorage, Alaska.

The Blackwater Trading Post Land Transfer Act

- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take land in Pinal County, Arizona into trust for the Gila River Indian Community.

The Old Pascua Community Land Acquisition Act

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to take certain land in Pima County, Arizona into trust for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona.

A bill to amend the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010 to modify the enforceability date for certain provisions, and for other purposes.

- Amends the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010 to ensure the federal government and the Tribe can complete construction of water storage, delivery, and treatment facilities for the reservation, and to cover the updated cost of the project.

The Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act of 2022

- Authorizes the Colorado River Indian Tribes to enter into agreements to lease, exchange, and store water off-reservation in the Lower Basin of the Colorado River in Arizona, subject to approval by the Secretary of the Interior.
- Authorizes the Tribes to enter into agreements to conserve water in Lake Mead.

The Agua Caliente Land Exchange Fee to Trust Confirmation Act

- Takes approximately 2,560 acres of specified lands in California into trust for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to be part of the Tribe's reservation.
- Prohibits gaming on this land taken into trust.

The Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2022

- Authorizes and ratifies the water rights settlement agreement between the Hualapai Tribe, certain allottees, and the state of Arizona.
- Funds water-related projects and allows the Tribe to access water from the Colorado River, the Bill Williams River, and the Verde River.
- Transfers certain lands into trust for the Hualapai Tribe.

A bill to authorize leases of up to 99 years for land held in trust for the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation.

- Makes a technical amendment to the Long-Term Leasing Act of 1955 to allow the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation to lease their restricted lands for up to 99 years.

The Katimiñ and Ameekyáaraam Sacred Lands Act

- Takes approximately 1,031 acres of specified lands in Siskiyou and Humboldt Counties, California, into trust for the Karuk Tribe to use for traditional and customary uses.
- Provides continued access to the U.S. Forest Service for managing the component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that flows through the land.
- Requires the Department of Agriculture to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Tribe to establish mutual goals for the protection and enhancement of the river values.
- Prohibits gaming on the land taken into trust.

CRITICAL POLICY UPDATES FOR NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Federal Resources To Help Keep Native Women and Families Safe

- Tribal Title in the 2022 VAWA Reauthorization
 - Maintains Tribal jurisdiction over crimes of dating violence, domestic violence, and violations of Tribal civil protection orders first put in place by the 2013 VAWA reauthorization.
 - Restores Tribal jurisdiction over crimes of child violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking, stalking, obstruction of justice, and assault of Tribal justice personnel committed by non-Indian offenders.
 - Ensures all Tribes, including those in Alaska and Maine, can exercise important jurisdictional tools to keep their communities safe.
 - Provides Tribes with improved access to critical VAWA implementation resources.
- The VAWA Technical Amendment Act of 2022
 - Clarifies that Native Hawaiian organizations have access to federal grants to serve survivors in their local communities.

Advance Appropriations for IHS in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023

- Protects IHS programs from essential service disruptions due to funding uncertainty and government shutdowns.
- Brings IHS into parity with other federal health care providers, all of which either receive advance appropriations or mandatory funding.
- Prevents other impacts of IHS funding uncertainty, including risk of downgraded credit ratings on commercial loans secured by Tribes and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), challenges related to recruitment and retention of healthcare providers, and increased administrative burdens and costs.
- Enables long-term planning to maintain orderly and continuous operations of critical health programs.
- Helps fulfill the federal government's trust responsibility to provide Native Americans with quality health care.

New Native Behavioral Health Resources in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023

- Authorizes \$80 million in annual appropriations for four fiscal years to support Native communities' behavioral health needs.
- Ensures HHS consults with Tribes, confers with UIOs, and engages with the Native Hawaiian community on administration of this new non-competitive funding.
- Opens the door to delivery of funds through Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act contracts or compacts.

EVENTS

The Committee held 50 events this Congress, including 14 business meetings; 13 oversight hearings; nine legislative hearings; six roundtables; four field hearings in Hawai‘i, Alaska, and Minnesota; two nominations hearings; one listening session; and one meet-and-greet.

Topics covered by Committee events include –

- COVID-19 recovery for Native health care systems, education, tourism economies, and language revitalization;
- Climate resiliency and adaptation and environmental justice in Native communities;
- Native communities’ water, telecommunications, housing, and transportation infrastructure needs;
- Native communities’ economic development and access to capital;
- Voting matters in Native communities;
- Native American cultural heritage and patrimony repatriation;
- Public safety in Native communities;
- Cannabis in Indian Country;
- Federal Indian boarding schools; and
- Specific treaties and trust obligations with certain Indian Tribes and Native communities.

NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

The Senate confirmed two nominees under the Committee’s jurisdiction this Congress.

- Bryan Todd Newland to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.
- Roselyn Tso to serve as Director of the Indian Health Service at HHS.

Additionally, Senator Schatz exercised his authority as Chairman to appoint Mark Patterson of Hawai‘i to serve on the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, an independent executive branch organization that makes recommendations to the President and Congress.